

Community Preservation Act Committee

Date: February 1, 2023

Time: 6:05pm – 8:30pm

Location: Conducted remotely due to Covid-19.

Minutes

Remote Participation:

- Clarissa Rowe
- Jo Anne
- Preston
- Susan
- Doctrow
- David
- Swanson
- JoAnn
- Robinson
- Leslie Mayer
- Kin Lau
- Alexander
- Franzosa
- Pamela Heidell

Also Attending Remotely:

- Julie Wayman
 - Budget
 - Director
- Jim Feeney
 - Deputy Town
 - Manager
- Deanna Stacchi
 - Minutes
- Joe Connelly
- Josh Fenollosa
- Brian McBride
- David Morgan
- Jack Nagle
- Steve Moore
- Beth Melofchik
- Michael Brown
- Ann LeRoyer

Budget Director, Julie Wayman, welcomed members and guests at 6:05pm. Ms. Wayman explained that due to Covid-19 the meeting was conducted remotely and read through the

Town's disclaimers about remote meetings and the Acknowledgement of Native Lands. Ms. Wayman noted that the meeting was being recorded.

Clarissa Rowe, CPAC Chair, shared that the FY24 CPA requests exceed the available funds by about \$1 million. She requested that groups consider reducing their requests, if possible. Ms. Rowe stated that there would be no vote taken this evening. Ms. Rowe also explained that due to the high level of interest in the Hill's Hill project and in the interest of time, two individuals had been chosen to speak after Mr. Connelly's presentation, one in favor and one opposed. She thanked the public for their input and interest in the project.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes of 11/22/2022, 1/23/2023 – Tabled

FY24 Applicant Presentations

a. Hill's Hill – Arlington Recreation Department

Joe Connelly, Director of Recreation, started the presentation by explaining that the project began at the request of an Arlington youth who had come up with the idea to create mountain bike trails at Crusher Lot. The teen came up with the idea during Covid, a time when teens struggled to find ways to exercise, interact distantly and safely while giving them much needed relief from screen time. A working group was created in August 2020 to review several properties and decide on an ideal location. A feasibility study was conducted using existing funds. Mr. Connelly noted that the project has received lots of support from the town, receiving hundreds of letters of support including many submitted by Arlington youth. He also stressed that the goal of the Parks and Recreation Commission is to maximize recreational use of open spaces.

Mr. Connelly presented the conceptual design plan stressing that the final plan and pump track location have not been determined. Hill's Hill was chosen as the project location because natural bike trails already exist along with the trails created by years of use. The purpose of the project is to make the beginner level trails safe and accessible. He also noted that the location is next to the Arlington Recreation office, allowing for better supervision and accessible parking. The Recreation Department is also planning to offer bike rentals and mountain biking classes.

The projected cost of the project is \$400K. Mr. Connelly shared that PRC takes fiscal responsibility very seriously, noting that CPAC had approved \$2.157M for the Hurd project and that PRC anticipates returning \$400K in unused funds. He also included a list of previous PRC projects showing a proven track record of holding public input sessions, listening to the community and incorporating their feedback and ideas into final projects. Mr. Connelly shared that 18 public input meetings for the Hill's Hill project have been held between September 2021 and January 2023.

Ms. Preston - Proposed that CPAC read the letter submitted by the Open Space Committee explaining the Open Space recreational plan. She suggested a two-part project. 1.) FY24 – CPA funding for design and 2.) FY25 CPA funding for construction.

Ms. Heidell – Asked if there were disadvantages and/or advantages in phasing the project over two years. Mr. Connelly explained that PRC typically avoids phasing projects due to delays in construction and probable cost increases. The project timeline was created to ensure that the project goes out to bid during February, the optimal bidding time.

Mr. Lau – Noted the language in the Hill’s Hill deed, stressing that land be used specifically as a park for the youth of Arlington.

Ms. Mayer – Stressed that dividing the project into two parts ultimately adds to the cost of the project. She also thanked Mr. Connelly for pointing out all the positive and successful work the PRC has done. Ms. Mayer commended the members of the Commission for their dedication to commitment to listening to and working with the public.

Ms. Doctrow – Had the opportunity to visit the site with Ms. Preston and Mr. Connelly. She also stressed that the photo of the conceptual plan, including the pump track location, is not representative of the final project. She asked whether, if the pump track or other trails are installed in the brush-filled area set away from the top of the property, could it be framed with more nature by planting additional trees? Mr. Connelly responded that yes it was possible and that all PRC projects try to incorporate the addition of trees and that the project proposal does not include the removal of any trees. Ms. Doctrow also commented that she was leaning against staging the project, because of delay and added cost that Ms. Mayer mentioned, and would rather approve funding for design and construction and trust in the design process, because it would have substantial public input.

Brian McBride – Believes that there is generally a good feeling between the opposing groups. He suggested that Hill’s Hill be valued for the natural wooded space that it already is while considering preservation needs. He acknowledges the great work of PRC but asked that the Commission leave some areas natural. Mr. McBride noted that 40% of the concern from those opposed to the project was about the location of the pump track. The group had requested that the location be moved but the design was not changed. The group’s requests – 1.) Move the pump track out of the woods 2.) Build trails with ecological protection 3.) Consider not removing existing plants. Mr. McBride concluded by requesting that considerations be added to the proposal before CPAC considers funding approval.

Josh Fenollosa – Shared the backstory of how the request of a 15 year-old evolved into the creation of a working group and project development by the PRC. Mr. Fenollosa stated that many children and teens are suffering during this mental health crisis. It has been proven that playing outside, versus constant screen time including the lengthy time of online learning, provides a “boost” to struggling individuals. He also noted that there is a huge need for non-structured, nature-based, multi-generational recreation in Arlington. Mountain biking is an accessible activity that allows non-able bodied individuals to participate in the same activities as their peers. He also stressed that the project design would be knit into the existing nature of

Hill's Hill and that the conceptual design was not final. Mr. Fenollosa concluded by urging CPAC to approve the funding request so that the project can move forward.

Ms. Rowe – Thanked the members of the community for all the emails and letters about the project. She urged everyone to read the input from both sides. She also requested that PRC consider staging the project due to the limited CPA budget.

b. Menotomy Rocks Park Picnic and Playground – Arlington Recreation Department

Mr. Connelly shared that the current playground was deemed “unsafe and unusable” during the playground audit. The playground needs to be moved because it was constructed in a densely wooded area and built on root systems. The picnic tables have already been removed due to safety concerns. The \$315K project has the support of Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park.

Mr. Connelly presented a conceptual plan that includes a small playground geared toward young children and a picnic grove. Both features will be accessible. Public process is anticipated for Fall 2023.

Ms. Rowe – Confirmed that the existing playground was built 32 years ago and was in dire need of being fixed and moved.

c. Invasive Vegetation Removal – Arlington Conservation Commission

David Morgan presented on behalf of the project stating that a town wide survey of invasive species will identify the needs and goals to protect and preserve. He noted that invasive species were identified in all 52 sites that have already been evaluated. Mr. Morgan shared photos of volunteers assisting with water chestnut removal, noting that the mechanical harvester is not able to retrieve everything. He also shared data provided through the inaturalist app which will be integrated in GIS(?). The projected timeline is short with work beginning in July and completed in December of 2023. The ideal time to conduct the survey is September.

Ms. Mayer – Suggested organizing a workshop to educate volunteers in identifying invasive species and the safe and proper way to remove them.

Steve Moore – Stated his support for the project and inquired if the project includes invasive tree species. Mr. Morgan responded that it would depend on the survey, design and methodology. He presumes that it may involve saplings, not mature trees, but more discussion is needed.

Ms. Rowe – Noted that Norway Maple trees are invasive species planted throughout Arlington. Ms. Preston added that the trees propagate early and can take over other trees, but they also survive in areas where other species do not thrive. The state's determination is that existing Norway Maples should not be removed but new ones should not be planted.

Mr. Moore – Stated that the tree inventory does not include parks and private land.

Beth Melofchik – Expressed support for the project and stated that she was active in invasive species removal.

d. Mill Brook Preservation – Arlington Conservation Commission

Mr. Morgan stated that the project will “buffer and beautify” Mill Brook from the Lexington line by the Reservoir to Colonial Village. The \$120K ask will be used to fund a feasibility study, 75% design, permitting and construction prep work. He noted that the aquatic harvester had been removed from the initial proposal. Mr. Morgan presented photos of invasive species, bank conditions and current elevations. A primary goal is to lessen maintenance needs. The proposed timeline was created to align with public and ConCom meetings.

Ms. Preston – Asked how the procedures would affect wildlife, noting that she had visited the location with several Drake Village residents to view the turtles. Mr. Morgan stated that the goal of the project was to enhance the value of the wildlife habitat through stabilization of banks and trees which will prevent further erosion and maintain the animal’s natural habitat.

Ms. Mayer – Stated that the PRC had similar concerns about potential effects on existing wildlife during the Reservoir project. She felt that the contractors were very respectful of the project goals to preserve the natural habitat and sensitive to the needs of wildlife. She expects the same for the Mill Brook project.

Mr. Moore – Shared that his biggest concern during the Hurd Field project was that Mill Brook was not included in the scope. He understands that PRC does not have jurisdiction over the brook and is glad that these issues are now being addressed.

Ms. Melofchik – Noted that she attended the PRC meetings when Mr. Moore and Elisabeth Carr-Jones spoke about Mill Brook concerns. She also supports the project and is glad that it will address the critical needs of the habitat area.

e. 21 Pond Lane Feasibility Study – Department of Planning and Community Development

David Morgan presented the design concept and project goals initiated by Ben Barkan of Home Harvest. He is looking to create an orchard on the secluded vacant parcel of land located at 21 Pond Lane. The orchard will create beautified, accessible and usable space. The orchard’s accessibility will not only be in compliance with ADA regulations, but also accessible to other amenities such as the Minuteman Bikeway, Spy Pond and the Spy Pond playground. He noted that bikeway access has the potential to be costly work with the MBTA. The current access is an informal path created by users walking through.

The location was initially purchased with CDBG funds for the purpose of constructing a MBTA stop for the Red Line. While the proposal failed, it was discovered that there is a live water line that would be ideal for maintaining the orchard.

Mr. Franzosa – Noted that the stretch of Pond Lane going through the parking lot and going under the bridge is treacherous for drivers and pedestrians. Mr. Morgan stated that he will be discussing safety and accessibility further with the Transportation Department. Additional signage and design elements will be included in the project to increase safety.

Ms. Mayer – Asked if CDBG funding have been requested. Mr. Morgan stated that the project was not eligible for CDBG funding.

Mr. Lau – Suggested “flipping the design” which could reduce traffic and provide a better view of Spy Pond rather than creating more parking. Mr. Morgan agreed, noting that an alternative may be looked at through the feasibility study.

Michael Brown, Town Meeting Member Precinct 17, noted that the bike path from Linwood Street to the Boys and Girls Club was very accessible and safe.

f. No Name Brook Preservation – Open Space Committee

David Morgan shared area photos showing severe damage including invasive species, storm water contamination and failing infrastructure. This project is to address the critical need to preserve the brook stretching along the bikeway from Bow Street (Lexington) to Lowell Street/Viking Court. The goals include water mitigation to manage flooding which causes damage to the surrounding pavement. In 2012 the estimated cost was \$3M, which will be considerably higher in 2023. Additional goals include; maintain the character and quality of the stretch of from Hurd to Bow Street (Lexington), replace the Lowell Street underpass railing and address the asphalt destruction littering the brook while maintaining and preserving the natural components.

The Engineering Department is conducting preliminary studies. Additional permits and MBTA licensing approval is required to conduct work in the wetland area. The \$2600 application fee and \$1000 license fee are not included in the proposal. Mr. Morgan shared photos of existing conditions showing low flow, debris, invasive species and root damage to the bikeway.

A longer timeline is anticipated to allow for more public engagement with the hope of creating stewardship and a re-naming contest to get the community involved.

Ms. Rowe – Warned that her experience working with the MBTA has been that they are very slow to process requests.

Mr. Moore – Requested clarification if the project included the entire stretch of No Name Brook and whether it would be considered a 40B project. Mr. Morgan stated the project does include the entire stretch and that the 40B designation had been withdrawn.

g. Orchard Signage - Open Space Committee

David Morgan presented the project request which was initiated as part of a collaboration between Arlington Girl Scout Troop 62592 and Ben Barkan of Home Harvest. Through discussion it was realized that most residents did not know that the orchard existed or where it was located. The goal of the project is to increase community involvement and encourage creativity. DPW will also be involved in the installation and maintenance of the signage. Since the orchard is DCR property, the project proposal is for signage at the Washington Street and Brattle Street access points only. The parcel will not be touched.

Ms. Mayer – Noted that she has experienced issues with the MBTA during past projects and asked if the proposal needed to be cleared with the MBTA to prevent the entire project from being scuttled. Mr. Morgan will look into other locations, if needed.

Ann LeRoy – Stated that she is supportive of the project, having been involved in the completion of the latest Open Space plan and spending many years setting goals to improve waterways and create recreational opportunities.

Ms. Mayer – Inquired why Mr. Morgan was not asked to prioritize projects stating that PRC had taken one of their proposed projects completely off the table considering the available funding. Ms. Heidell also noted that ConCom had reduced their asks by almost ½. She also stressed the importance of Mills Brook because PRC did not have jurisdiction to include it in the Hurd project. Ms. Mayer stated that Mills Brook is a waterway, not PRC property. Ms. Rowe clarified that groups with high-cost projects were asked to prioritize in the interest of the budget. The group agreed that the town needs to create a waterway committee. He also shared a priority list for each group. ConCom would prioritize Mill Brook over the Invasive Species project and Open Space would prioritize Orchard signage over No Name Brook.

New Business – Ms. Rowe said that the final CPAC meeting would be scheduled by this Friday. Voting will take place at the final meeting.

Ms. Rowe concluded the meeting at 8:30pm.